

What is “The Doctrine of Christ”?

2 Jn. 7-10 – “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver, and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

Obviously the “doctrine of Christ” is of paramount importance, but what does that mean? Basically the doctrine of Christ means that teaching which they had received from the apostles about who Jesus was, is, and shall be. It is obvious that even at this early date (late 1st century AD), there were beginning to be odd and heretical teachings arising about Christ, which were polluting and contaminating the church. John was the only yet surviving one of the twelve, and he was concerned that they would be turned out of the way by heretical teachings.

True to his warnings, the early centuries saw many alternatives to the truth of God arise, and the church had to deal with them in various councils to determine what would and would not be considered valid teachings. Not all these were about the doctrine of Christ, but many were. What seemed to be simple (and was) in the early teachings was twisted and philosophized until it had to be rejected as “un-Christian”.

A simple statement of the teachings of the apostles was this: that there was a man named Jesus of Nazareth who was born of a virgin in accordance with OT prophecy, that he was a prophet of God, but more, the very Son of God. He went about the land of Israel teaching the people, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing people of diseases, casting demons out of people, and doing miracles. He had twelve disciples who went with him in his travels, and were personally taught by him. He was eventually crucified by the Romans at the insistence of the Jewish leaders, but after three days he was raised back to life and went about the land for 40 days, being seen by a great number of his disciples. He was then taken up bodily into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God, and at some future time will physically return to this earth to bring the nations and all the (resurrected) dead to judgment, of the unrighteous to everlasting condemnation and punishment, and the righteous to everlasting life together with God.

Now none of this seems to be all that difficult to comprehend, simply by reading the scriptures, yet over time, various heretical teachings arose. This was not just a matter of ancient history either – those same teachings continue even to this day in some form or another. Why? Because the same devil that inspired the original errors knows he can just do “reruns” on people who are ignorant, both of church history, and of the Bible itself. This is why we have a large number of “cults” and religious groups that may or may not claim to be “Christian” yet teach some twisted version of what is in the Bible.

Examples: Jehovah Witnesses, Mormonism, Armstrong Worldwide Church of God, Scientology, various forms of Masonry, Christian Science, the Unification Church (“Moonies”), “The Way”, Theosophy, Universalism/Unitarianism, “ultimate reconciliation”, and others. To this may be added Roman Catholicism and all the modern liberal Protestant denominations that have a form of religion, but reject all the fundamental teachings of the Bible.

With even such a partial list of errors and heresies, how can we possibly guard against them? Do we have to immerse ourselves in their teachings to know exactly what they teach and why they are wrong? No – that would be exhausting, fruitless, and possibly dangerous, if you start getting confused and lose your own footing.

[Although if you have family, co-workers, or other close acquaintances that are involved in this stuff, you would be wise to learn the basics of what that particular group believes, together with the corresponding answers from the Bible, so you can protect yourself, and hopefully deliver them.]

In the end, they all seem to stumble at the same things – verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture, the Triune nature of God, the eternal deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, hell as real and everlasting punishment, that there is salvation in Christ alone, etc.

We must ground ourselves in the truth, so that we will recognize error when it is presented. We don’t have to be college-educated, or experts on the cults – we simply need to regularly and consistently feed on the Bible itself. Then when confronted by one of their door-knockers, you will be able to recognize that something is not right.

What do we know from the Word about Jesus Christ?

The following are merely the most important things. To describe Christ in full would take more books than the earth could hold (Jn. 21:25) I will present only a few scriptures for each.

The Deity of Christ

The common error is that Christ was just a man: a good man, even a prophet of God, but nothing more. God saw that he was a good man, decided to call him his son, and used him as an example for us to follow.

The truth is that he is the eternal and uncreated Son of God, and that he is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (which can also be said of the Father and the Spirit, because "God in one God, eternally manifested as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Jn. 1:1-4, 1 Tim. 3:16, Col. 2:9, Heb. 1:1-4)

The Humanity of Christ

Early heresies denied that he was really a man, because "God cannot die". They said that Christ only *appeared* to be a man, and that he only *appeared* to die.

The truth is that Jesus was fully God and fully man in one indivisible nature. The word "Incarnation" means that God (the Son) became a man, a real, man in the flesh – Heb. 2:14-17. He lived and breathed, became weary in walking, ate and drank, spoke and heard. The disciples could touch him. He was not a mere ghost.

Why? So that he could suffer and die as a sinless and holy Substitute, and so he could have compassion on us and better function as our great High Priest (Heb. 2:17).

The Life and Teachings of Christ

Some would say that Jesus had an uncommonly astute awareness of spiritual truth and taught us out of his own human wisdom.

The truth is that he is the Light of the world, and Life itself, and is the eternal Word, and Wisdom personified. He spoke not merely human wisdom but Truth itself, revealing himself to mankind. Jn. 1:1-10. He led an absolutely sinless life. Heb. 5:15, 9:14

The Death of Christ

The common error is that he was a good man unfortunately murdered by the Romans and Jews, and the benefit is in his teachings while he was here, and his life as an example of self-giving love.

The truth is that he willingly gave himself to die, not as a mere example, but as a pure and holy sacrifice, actually bearing the penalty of our guilt so that we could live (spiritually). Jn. 10:17-18, Heb. 9:14, 26-28, 10:10-14

The Resurrection of Christ

The common error is that he was not really raised from the dead – that it was an elaborate hoax, or group hallucinations, or that it was not a physical resurrection, just a spiritual one. Some people don't even think belief in the resurrection is that important, that what matters is how we live our lives today.

The truth is that after three days and nights in the tomb, he was literally and physically raised from the dead (his body came back to life). He was seen by a great many people. 1 Cor. 15 covers this in great depth, but the resurrection is also a major common point in all the preaching in the book of Acts. 4:10, 5:30-31,

The Ascension and Second Coming of Christ

Acts 1:1-11 relates how, 40 days after the resurrection, Christ ascended bodily into heaven, in the presence of his disciples. As they gawked, an angel told them that this same Jesus would return in the same manner (bodily). He had told his disciples he would return (Jn. 14:1-3, Mt. 24:30, in the parable of a man going into a far country, and many others). Rev. 19 describes it in awesome detail.

THIS is the Jesus that is presented by the Bible, and there is salvation in none but him. Ac. 4:12, Jn. 14:6. There is an invitation to you, if you do not yet know him – Jn. 1:12-13 – "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."